

Charlottesville City Council Meeting Minutes
Site visit to Champaign-Urbana, Illinois Mass Transit District (MTD)
May 16-18, 2024

On May 16, 2024, a delegation from Charlottesville and Albemarle traveled to Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, for a site visit and discussion with Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD) personnel. MTD is the public transit provider for Champaign, Urbana, Savoy and on the campus of the University of Illinois, offering mobility options that include buses, rides for seniors, ADA Paratransit, and resources to encourage walkability, biking, and safety. Day one was a travel day.

On Saturday, May 17, the delegation met at 11:30 a.m. for a luncheon with Mr. Karl Gnadt, Managing Director and CEO of MTD, and members of his senior leadership team. The luncheon was hosted at Hyatt Place Champaign/Urbana. The purpose of the meeting was to have a conversation with MTD senior staff concerning their decision-making process for transitioning their fleet to alternative fuel vehicles.

Garland Williams, Director of Charlottesville Area Transit (CAT), opened the luncheon by stating the purpose and all participants introduced themselves. Three members of Charlottesville City Council were in attendance: Mayor Juandiego Wade and Councilors Michael Payne and Lloyd Snook. Other participants were:

- Kristel Riddervold, Charlottesville Director of Sustainability
- Barry Herring, Assistant Director of Transit for Finance and Grants Management at CAT
- Diantha McKeel, Chair of the Regional Transit Partnership and member of the Albemarle Board of Supervisors
- Ann Wall – Albemarle County Deputy Administrator
- Ben Chambers – Charlottesville Transportation Planning Manager
- Michael Newbill, CAT Assistant Director of Maintenance and Facilities
- Alex Pasqualone, CAT Marketing Coordinator
- Kimley-Horn consultants
- Staff from MTD
- Kyna Thomas, Chief of Staff/Clerk of Council

Mr. Gnadt provided a summary of MTD services, acknowledging that Champaign-Urbana is home to the University of Illinois, with service to 57,000 students plus faculty and staff by agreement. Similar to Charlottesville, they were negatively impacted by the Covid pandemic with the loss of ridership and employees. They provide 12 million rides per year with 118 buses, and their fleet is 100% low and zero emission.

Discussion topics included funding, ridership, relationship with the university, pros and cons of various bus and fuel types, fuel efficiency for different sized buses, repairs and maintenance, solar power, power redundancy and resiliency, liquid delivery, lack of future diesel engine availability, space planning for facilities, safety, marketing and education videos, pupil transportation, fuel storage and fueling logistics.

The group then rode a hydrogen-fueled bus to the MTD bus facility for a site tour and presentation, where Mr. Gnadt and team reviewed financial aspects of the fleet conversion project, infrastructure and scalability. The tour included the hydrogen production station, the fueling station with multiple fuel types in proximity, as well as the maintenance and storage facility. Discussion was held about future site expansion. Two types of buses in the fleet are the 60-foot New Flyer XHE bus and the 40-foot New Flyer XHE bus.

At the conclusion of the tour and presentation around 4:00 p.m., the delegation returned to the hotel and had an informal dinner at a restaurant, where no further public business was discussed.

May 18 was a travel day.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council